

Kansas Public Health Association, Inc.

SALUTES

Alice P. Jensen, R.N.

and

**Nellie G. Walker,
M.D., M.P.H.**



Samuel J. Crumbine Banquet

May 10, 1972

Holiday Inn Plaza-Wichita

SAMUEL J. CRUMBINE BANQUET

SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARD

To give recognition to members who have given long and faithful service in the field of public health, the Kansas Public Health Association has established a Service Recognition Award. This Award is presented to those who are selected by a committee composed of the President of the Association and the Chairman of each Section. The Award, in the form of a Certificate, was presented for the first time in 1956.

Past Recipients

1956—Miss Cassandra Ritter Mary C. Bure, R.N.	1965—Virginia Pence Lockhart, M.P.H.
1957—Alice M. Finley, R.N. Ivan F. Shull, M.P.H.	Waldo W. Wilmore, M.A.
1958—Sarah Zeller, R.N. James T. Newton	1966—Leona M. Boyd Paul E. Luckan
1959—Bertha H. Campbell Melvin O. Johnson, B.S.	1967—Evelyn I. Ford Guy G. Salts
1960—C. Herbert Munger, M.D. Jesse M. Reddy	1968—Loretta B. Wilson, R.N. Willard R. Bellinger, D.D.S., M.P.H.
1961—Flora Acton McKinley Evan E. Wright	1969—Opal Becker Alberta Mahaney, R.N.
1962—Bernard J. Langdon Margaret P. Shadoan, R.N.	1970—Blaine Logan Glendening, Ph. D. John Zook
1963—Roberta E. Foote, R.N. James M. Mott, M.D.	1971—Hester G. McCurley, R.N. Harry Wettig
1964—Hannah E. Lindberg, R.N. Russell J. Stanbridge	



ALICE P. JENSEN, R.N.

Alice Jensen was born in Massena, Iowa. The middle child in a family of nine children, she was introduced to the "group process" very early in life. She also had early experience with the "ladder" concept in career development, as her family had very well defined steps in its organizational pattern. At about four years of age, a child helped an older brother or sister gather fuel for the cook-stove. From this point one progressed systematically by steps to such adult responsibilities as baking bread and milking which Alice was doing by the time she was 10.

A joy of her childhood was exploring the virgin timberland on their farm. She could see the remains of deep ruts cut by covered wagons as the Mormons moved westward toward Omaha. Those tracks added to the sense of adventure and provided a link with her American heritage. It was there, too, that Alice developed a great interest in nature and a determined but unrealistic dream of becoming a forest ranger. This persisted Alice recalls, until she entered high school. Little did she realize that such an occupation might have to wait for Women's Lib.

High school at Massena opened up a new world for Alice, leading to aspirations for a career in the fine arts field.

The first few years neighbors took turns driving. After that, it seemed that a daily six-mile walk was the only way Alice could continue high school. Finally her father bought a Model T Ford of ancient vintage for her and two younger

brothers to drive. Alice says she isn't sure that it took less energy than walking, but at least they got to ride **down** the hills.

Although she yearned to go to college to study art, Alice had to forget it and earn her own living. The last thing she wanted to do was teach school but it seemed to be the most logical possibility. She attended an Iowa State Teachers College summer extension course at Atlantic, Iowa, and her teaching career began in a rural school in 1929. It resembled tutoring because she never had more than eight pupils and at one time only four.

Her most critical problems were not pedagogical (she doubts now that she would have recognized those). Instead her problems were such as building a fire on a cold winter morning when she found 10 to 12 vivacious mice in the coal pail!

Alice tells about another harrowing incident. It happened after she had heard about a horrible tragedy in another one-room school. She sat at her desk as the evening shadows lengthened across the schoolroom floor. Hearing footsteps outside, she froze in terror.

To make a long suspense story short, when the moment of encounter arrived she found herself gazing into the eyes of—a hog weighing about 450 pounds!

Teaching gave Alice experience in community organization. With only four pupils, there were limitations in planning and presenting programs (her favorite part of teaching). She revived the lyceum that was held in the district in pioneer

days. The monthly program became so popular they had to move it to a community center to accommodate the crowd. Some came as far as 15 miles!

Typical of her personality, Alice determined that if she had to be a teacher she would be a good one. She says that she became increasingly frustrated with her own lack of skill and the educational methods she had acquired. (This might be open to doubt.) After eight years of teaching, she closed the schoolroom door that spring of 1937, determined never to return.

When her younger sister planned to enter nursing school, Alice impulsively decided to join her. They applied at the Nebraska Methodist Hospital in Omaha. A new "progressive" selection process was introduced that fall—a pattern of psychological tests to determine if the applicant had the emotional maturity for nursing. Apparently the two girls were mature enough because they received the acceptance notification and list of essentials, including black shoes and stockings! Alice admits that if she hadn't found medical science so intellectually stimulating and nursing so rewarding, she might not have adjusted to fashions worn 30 years before and a 10 o'clock dormitory curfew.

By the next year, the class had only partially proved the validity of the psychological tests. They were mature enough to wear the traditional white but never permitted to decide how late they could stay out at night.

Alice's teaching experience, concern for

children who had health problems that interfered with their learning, and a desire to help prevent some of the tragedies she had seen as a student nurse—these all contributed to her decision to go into public health nursing.

She accepted a position with the Nebraska State Health Department and was assigned to a health unit at North Platte, Nebraska. Her first home visit increased her deep interest in maternal and child health. She followed up a physician's referral on a woman due for delivery without any prenatal care. Alice made her first visit and returned a week later to find a wreath on the door. Her patient had died, leaving 10 small children.

Probably at no time in her career did Alice learn more nor have a more varied experience than during the years of World War II. She was assigned to Alliance, Nebraska, to an air base for the final phase of training for paratroopers and glider pilots. She worked under the direction of the health officer at Scotts Bluff, Dr. Vernon Winkle who later came to Kansas.

As the only public health worker in Alliance (as well as the first one to ever work in the county), Alice was both program planner and developer. There were times when she was health officer and sanitarian as well as public health nurse.

In 1946, Alice received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Health Nursing from George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. She and a co-worker chose that college to learn about life outside the midwest.

She became nursing supervisor in the Health

Department in Lincoln, Nebraska, and for the next four years, served as nursing education director. The following year she was an instructor at the School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, earning in 1955 an MPH with special work in mental health.

On August 1, 1955, Alice became Local Public Health Nursing Director of the Topeka-Shawnee County Health Department. She has approached the planning and development of nursing services on the basis of epidemiological principles and sound research.

Some of the studies in which she was instrumental were on the less-than-licensure size adult care homes; the evaluation of the Home Nursing Care of the Sick Project; on medical care services of the indigent medical care clinics, and patients on home care. She has published papers in the **American Journal of Public Health** and **Hospital Topics** on child health conferences, and maternal and newborn care.

Alice was responsible for planning the nursing program used in the design of the new health center completed in 1964. This nursing program was designed to meet anticipated needs of a metropolitan population in Topeka of 225,000.

As director of nurses, Alice has administered all public health nursing and clinical services of the department. She has pioneered development and refinement of pediatric nurse-clinician education and utilization; refined the concept of well-child health care; educated her staff in the concepts of mental health; reorganized county nursing service areas; developed public health nurse co-

ordinators for post-hospital care planning; planned and expanded comprehensive neighborhood health services and the home care program of visiting nursing; developed the use of multi-agency community service teams; and more recently, expanded medical nursing services for the North Topeka Health Center.

Alice is very much involved in many community service organizations. She is an active member of the Family and Children's Services Section of Community Resources Council; Advisory Committee of the Shawnee Community Mental Health Corporation; Health Department Committee on Neighborhood Health Centers; District #1, Kansas State Nurses Association; and nationally, she has served on the Review Board of the National Institute of Mental Health.

"You may not know how very exceptional we feel she is," remarked the nursing supervisor when she learned that Alice had been selected for a Service Recognition Award. "My clinic nurses want to declare a holiday so they can attend the presentation."

Obviously Alice Jensen has provided leadership for her staff in the expanded role of the public health nurse in meeting the service demands of a growing population.



NELLIE G. WALKER, M.D., MPH

Nellie Walker was born on a Sunday evening on the 26th of May, 1907, the year of the gold panic. Her parents, Harry and Nellie Gross, did not "panic," however. She was their fourth child and they felt they could handle the situation themselves. It was well that they did because there wasn't a doctor available, anyway.

The birthplace was a small four-room, cement block house in the primitive town of Carrizozo, New Mexico. Mr. Gross, who had gone west for his health following service in the Spanish-American War, was an engineer on the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad. Since railroad families were transferred from one division to another, the family moved frequently. By the time she was four years old, Nellie had lived in four different states.

After a try at the restaurant business in Canton, Ohio, her father took the whooping cough from the baby. He was out of work for nine months so the family lived with Nellie's great-grandparents in Harrietsville, Ohio, while he recovered. Then, leaving the family behind, he went to Guthrie, Oklahoma, where he eventually found work on the Santa Fe.

Nellie was injured in a fall when she was two years old. Because of the aftermath of the injury, she didn't go to school until she was seven. It was in a small country schoolhouse in Harrietsville. Her mother and grandmother had gone there, her uncle was principal, and the pupils were mostly

cousins— first, second, and third removed. There was a water bucket in one corner with a common drinking dipper tied to it with a string. All the other accommodations were equally modern and sanitary!

Near the end of her first year in school, the family was reunited in Guthrie. Nellie graduated from the 8th grade there as valedictorian. Their next move was to Kansas City, Missouri where she attended Westport High School. After one semester, however, her old back injury gave her trouble again. She spent a year in bed, in a body cast. During that time she made doll clothes for the neighbor children, embroidered everything her mother could find, and listened to her first radio programs through ear phones attached to a small crystal set.

Nellie finished high school with honors and attended Kansas City Missouri Junior College for two years. By adding some college subjects to her medical course, she received her B.S. in Medicine degree in June, 1933 and her M.D. one year later.

While she was in medical school, she married George A. Walker. He was working his way through school and was also an instructor in Microscopic Anatomy at the time. He had an infant daughter, Joy, whose mother had died in childbirth.

After Nellie's graduation from medical school, she and her husband didn't see each other for a full year. He was finishing med school and there was no hospital near home where she could serve

her internship. So she went to a small general hospital in Braddock, Pennsylvania, just outside Pittsburgh. Internships were hard to obtain in those days, especially for a married woman doctor.

Although she wanted to take a residency in medicine to further her career, Nellie couldn't endure the prospect of another year without seeing her husband and child. She went back to Kansas City.

Establishing a private practice was of paramount importance. It was during the depression, her husband was interning, and money was scarce. She started her practice at 34th and Broadway in the summer of 1935. She also welcomed the opportunity to work in the clinic at KU, primarily with medical and venereal disease patients. To her surprise, she found the work most interesting. It firmly established her interest in public health. And during World War II, she had complete charge of the VD and Special Treatment Clinic and Endocrine Clinics in Kansas City, Missouri, several nights a week.

She had moved her office to the "new" Plaza Medical Building and continued her practice there. Then she retired—briefly—to await the birth of her baby. Martha Sue was born on October 16, 1944.

After the baby was born, the Walkers went to Racine, Wisconsin, where he became pathologist for St. Luke's and St. Mary's Hospitals. Following three typical winters on the shore of Lake Michigan they moved to sunny Oakland, California. He commuted to San Francisco where

he was pathologist for St. Luke's Hospital. They were happy in their California home until he died suddenly of a heart attack early one morning.

Again Nellie returned to Kansas City, this time with one little girl. She left her older daughter, Joy, at the University of California at Berkeley.

Dr. Walker was licensed to practice in both Kansas and Missouri. She had been out of the practice for 5½ years, however, so she felt the need to brush up on medicine. Because of the interest and kindness of Dr. Wahl, she took a residency in pathology under him. Where better than the Morgue could she review the practice of medicine, studying the disease process, patient charts, and tissues under the microscope.

After a year of intensive review (and innumerable baby sitters), Dr. Walker left the residency to take a job at the Research Clinic. She needed enough money to support herself, her little daughter, and those baby sitters.

In 1954, she tried to return to private practice but found it almost impossible, with the care of her little girl. She was delighted when she was contacted about an opening in the Kansas City—Wyandotte County Health Department. She became Assistant Director on July 1, 1955, under Dr. H. Wallace Lane.

Nellie Walker had found her own particular niche.

Dr. Lane left Kansas City in 1956 and Dr. Walker became Acting Director. She was granted educational leave the next fall and on state stipend attended the School of Public Health in Chapel

Hill, North Carolina. In June 1956 she received her MPH degree.

Once more she returned to Kansas City—this time to become the full director of the Health Department, the position she still holds.

Asked about her choice of a career, Dr. Walker says that she can remember only one desire, one ambition. That was "to be a doctor to help other little crippled children." The innumerable trips to doctors and hospitals, the various back and leg braces throughout the years—these were her motivation. She says the only medical people in her family were her paternal great-grandfather and great, great-grandfather both of whom died before she was born.

When asked one time if she missed the usual doctor-patient relationship in her work at the Health Department, her answer was "The community is my patient."

Dr. Walker has all of the administrative duties relative to a large health department. There is the clinic, nursing, laboratory, tuberculosis program, X-ray, immunizations, environmental health in all its ramifications, and a multitude of other health problems. The department also works closely with many other agencies.

Space in this booklet does not permit the listing of the many organizations to which Dr. Walker belongs. She has been active in virtually every organization even remotely related to health, and with many civic groups.

As for KPHA, she has been a member since April, 1956. She has served on the Awards Com-

mittee, Legislative Committee, ad hoc committees, Task Force, Nominations Committee, High Plains Confederation Committee, and is presently on the 1973 Pilot Mo-Kan Committee. She has also been secretary of the Health Officers Section.

Recognitions include Who's Who in American Women. She was named vice-president of University of Kansas Medical Alumni Association in 1963-64. She has also received honorary memberships or awards from local groups of the PTA, Soroptimist, and Theta Sigma Phi. All were for outstanding service in the field of public health and medicine.

In spite of a demanding career, Dr. Walker has always taken time for other interests, especially her home and family. She legally adopted her step-daughter and raised her as her own child. Joy married Robert A. Bonar and has presented Dr. Walker with four grand-children.

Dr. Walker especially enjoyed Martha Sue's playing the pipe organ, piano, and violin. Martha, now Mrs. William E. Koehn, added two little girls to her mother's "wonderful grandchildren."

Dr. Walker's other hobbies include knitting, reading, sewing, bridge, music appreciation, gardening, raising African violets and cacti, and collecting rocks.

"The beauty and wisdom of a rock collector with a green thumb are very evident as motorists whiz along a certain boulevard in Kansas City, Kansas," writes one of her public health nurses. "The sloping knoll is an array of beauteous color from early spring to late fall. This is indeed a plea-

sant sight compared to similar inclines not too far distant."

Dr. Walker began collecting rocks when she was about 12 years old. Her parents took her on her first trip to Colorado in a Model T. She continued adding to her collection after her marriage, as the Walkers traveled all over the United States.

Other things besides rocks that Dr. Walker collects are clocks, china (antique Wedgewood, Jasper Ware), stamps, coins, antiques, dolls, genealogy, and friends.

Now there is a new addition—the KPHA Service Recognition Award. Although collecting various things has been so much a part of her life, Nellie Walker's real dedication is helping people.